

2010

# the Legacy



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# Evening on a Porch Swing

by: Kristin Thomas

We sat together in silence on the porch swing, my feet dangling as he rocked us gently with his feet firmly planted on the deck.

"You have such pretty feet. So small and delicate," he broke the quiet.

"That's funny, I've never been particularly fond of my feet."

"Why not?" his level voice challenged my dismissal of his compliment.

"They have so many scars on them. I don't think that's very beautiful," I equaled his tone, and our banter began.

The swing halted.

"You know, the most beautiful Man in the universe has scars on his feet."

"Yeah, but at least the scars on His feet tell of a noble act—an act of love.

All my scars can boast is foolishness and failure."

Silence settled over us as the swing commenced swaying again.

I rested my back against the back of the swing, confident of my victory.

"Well. That may be true," he started once more.

"But that's what makes the scars on his feet all the more beautiful."

"What do you mean?"

"His scars of love are permanent so that our scars of foolishness and failure

don't have to be."

# This Imprudent Heart

by: Kristin Thomas

At times I long for  
Forbidden fruit untasted,  
Rash as that might be.



photo by: Christy Kurtz



First Place

# Regret is Bitter to Swallow

by Kristin Thomas

I never meant for this to happen.  
But life is full of good intentions  
Gone bad, and maybe I should have anticipated  
The unexpected.

So archive me in your records—  
Another failed attempt,  
Another fulfilled prophecy;  
Reduce me to another statistic.



But know this:  
Numbers don't have heartbeats,  
And blood still courses through these veins.



photo by: Brandon Roberts





# [Un]Pleasentries

by Kristin Thomas

"How are you?"

You make the polite inquiry.

I reply in like fashion, and

The empty conversation flows

For five minutes.

We once talked for hours,

But times have changed—

We sprang forward

Only to fall back again.

Now you're wrapping things up;

Soon you'll walk away,

And I'm sorry to say,

I'm not pleased to make your acquaintance.



photo by: Curtis Prevo`

# Broken Heart

## Second Place

by: Emily Dana

If my heart were made of glass,  
I'm sure it would have shattered.  
If my heart were made of feathers,  
It would have blown away.  
If my heart were made of marble,  
It surely would have sunk.  
If my heart were made of gold,  
It would be forever tarnished.  
If my heart were made of clay,  
It simply would be flattened.  
If my heart were made of paper,  
It would be crumpled, torn, and shredded.  
If my heart were made of paint,  
It would be smeared and messy.  
If my heart were made of music,  
It would be still and silent.  
If my heart were made of fabric,  
I'm sure it would be threadbare.  
If my heart were made of water,  
It would have drained away.

But my heart is made of God—  
And He holds me in His arms  
And fixes where I'm broken.

He pieces the shattered glass back together,  
And He gathers the feathers in His hands.  
He holds the marble up high on His shoulder,  
And He gently polishes the tarnished gold.  
He continues to mold my clay with His hands,  
And He smooths the paper, leaving a few crinkles,  
So I won't forget what I've learned.  
Carefully He dabs the messy paint spots,  
And He puts a song in my heart again.  
He stitches the fabric and adds a sturdy patch.  
Then He takes the water, and uses it to clean my face,  
And wash away the tear streaks.

Yes, my heart is made of God,  
And He will fill my heart forever.





# Witness

by: Kristin Thomas

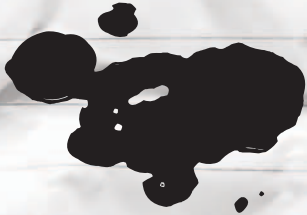
I won't give in this time;  
This time will be different.

My words float heavenward  
From my upturned lips  
As I  
Fall down

Again

Satan adds a mark~  
Another line on his chalkboard  
To testify.

But I,  
Through tear-stained face,  
Take God's hand to  
Stand up



Again

My Judge erases  
The Accuser's smirk and my mark  
To testify.



# For Adventure

by: Andrew Garcilazo

I loved adventure. I still do, but I loved it more back then. I was a kid. I wanted an adventure—I craved excitement. Sure I could read, or watch a movie, but that wasn't enough. Those things weren't real, and I yearned for reality. I wanted a story. I wanted people to remember my death defying escapades. I wanted people to write it down. Maybe I just wanted to be Tom Sawyer. Yeah, that sounds about right.

I did a lot of things to fill this need. I harassed my cat, I dug for buried treasure in my mom's garden, and I built my self a homemade bow to shoot homemade arrows (it didn't work, but I thought it was cool at the time). But most importantly, I camped. In my backyard.

Here's a story: It had been just another lazy summer afternoon, and I had set up my tiny, one man, A-frame tent, under a nice looking apricot tree. After I had set it up, I began to "move in," which was the lengthy process of bringing all my "important" possessions out from the bedroom I shared with my older brother, and into my new room—my tent.

At the end of the move in, my tent was filled with all sorts of junk that ranged from books, to teddy bears, to an empty box of graham crackers. Yes, those things were definitely vital to my survival, especially in the wilderness of our backyard.

I had always been excited to sleep out in my tent, all by myself, and I'm sure that night was no different. I don't remember exactly why, but for some reason I never journeyed out to my tent that night. Perhaps I had become so fatigued "moving in" that I fell asleep on the living room couch. Or maybe I had become so distracted by an Angel's game that I completely forgot about camping out. That seemed to happen a lot—I sure loved the Angels. Whatever the reason, it saved my life.

When we woke up the next morning, a massive tree branch, one that I had climbed on numerous occasions, lay on top of my tent. I would have been crushed. I would have died. Even worse, my cat would have had no one to sleep on.

See, I was an amazing, danger eluding, character of legend. Or at least, that's what I had thought. It was good story too, Tom Sawyer would be jealous. It made me seem adventurous somehow, to have almost been smashed by a giant tree, but it wasn't good enough. I wanted more.

If only I could run away from home—that would be adventurous. I actually packed my bags once, and stepped out the front door. I took a quick look around at the gloomy night sky, and at a few strangers passing by, but thought better of it. No, running away wasn't exciting enough. I was too good for it.



I needed to go and find a wild boar and spear it! Yes, that would be an adventure. Maybe I'd become a shipwrecked sailor and live like Robinson Crusoe. Maybe I would become a world famous athlete, yes, that would be a story.

If I couldn't swordfight a crusader, or live off the wilderness like Tom Hanks did in that one movie, then I might as well use my imagination. That's why I camped. That's why I poured salt on snails. That's why I destroyed anthills. That's why I hit tennis balls over the roof of my house. I did those things so I could pretend that I was somebody, so I could pretend that I was living an adventure.

My boyhood was filled with the possibility of it. Books and movies and backyard troublemaking would fill the void for a bit, but they only seemed to whet my appetite. I could only be Indiana Jones for two hours and only Frodo Baggins for three hundred pages. As much as I searched, as far as I searched, I couldn't seem to find the thrill and excitement that I was sure, lurked just around the corner.

I didn't realize that I was already living an adventure—the adventure of life. Yes, Tom Sawyer would be jealous.



photo by: Curtis Prevo





# Gas Controversy

by: Alison Quiring

Cars packed the Walmart gas station as I pulled in. I drove back around the pumps, looking for a place to get in line. I saw a pump with only one car, but just before I could pull into that line, a huge white van zoomed in front of me, getting in position before I could. Oh well, I thought. That's what you get for coming here on a Friday afternoon. I got in line behind the white van, put my Accord into park, and got busy people-watching out my open window until my turn. Less than a minute later, the car filling up with gas pulled out of the gas station and the van moved up. This isn't so bad, I reassured myself. I'll be out of here soon.

Just then a young man with an annoyed wrinkle on his forehead walked up to an older bearded man just stepping out of the van. "Excuse me, sir. I was waiting up there in front of that car to back in to this line and fill up with gas," the young man said, trying hard to be polite despite the obvious annoyance he was feeling. "Would you mind backing up, please, so I can take my turn? I've been waiting here a long time." I immediately shifted my car into reverse and backed up so that the van would be able to back up as well. The young man returned to his car.

"Sir, SIR!" I looked up to see the young man turned and strode back toward the white van. "I thought I told you to back up. I'm not sure if you heard me right, but you need to back up and let me in next." The old man, who I decided looked considerably like Moses (at least the Moses I saw in the pictures in Bible story books) because of his long flowing beard spat out, "Oh I heard you alright but I ain't gonna back up. Too bad if you were going to back up. I'm here now and I'm going to get my gas." Moses stepped forward and grasped the gas nozzle, pulling it from the pump with a violent twist. "What do you think you're doing!" shouted Mr. Follow-the-Rules. "Get in your van and back up or I'm going to call the cops on you." Moses didn't get back in his van or back up. He simply ignored Follow-the-Rules and started pumping gas. I realized I wasn't going to be able to get gas from that pump for awhile so I moved into another line and then tuned back in to the drama unfolding outside my window.

In another minute Follow-the-Rules had tattled to the lady at the pay window. She blazed out of her booth. "What do you think you're doing?" the lady shouted at Moses, who by now had to be close to filling up his tank. "You stop pumping gas this instant. It was his turn first and you're totally out of line." I stared out my window so intently that I almost didn't see the car in front of me move up to the pump. I moved my car ahead at a snail's speech, still watching the scene just two gas pumps over. Moses responded to In-Charge lady in a growl that I couldn't decipher. "The cops are on their way here so you just don't go anywhere until they get here," In-Charge flung at Moses as she flounced back to her post. A college-aged girl who had just finished pumping gas in the line beside mine declared in a drawl to Follow-the-Rules, "I'll be your witness when the cops arrive. I'm



just going to pull into a parking spot, but I'll back you up." She continued, "It's ridiculous how he's acting. What's wrong with people these days?" Miss Back-Up hopped in her car, pulled around my line, and parked before getting out of her car to talk to Follow-the-Rules.

The car in front of me left and I drove up, pre-paid for gas, and started pumping, listening to Follow-the-Rules and Back-Up's conspire together. Moses, now finished gassing up, but hemmed in between the Follow-the-Rules' car and one behind him, walked to the passenger window to grumble and swear to his wife. Sirens screeched in the distance and, by the time my tank was full, four cop cars had overtaken the gas station. "What seems to be the problem?" one cop asked as he swaggered towards Moses. I wondered how he knew who the culprit was. Follow-the-Rules and Back-Up burst out in a tirade of anger at Moses. Although I tried to think of anything else I could do at the gas station to stick around and watch the drama intensify, my mind was blank and I dutifully climbed back into my car and slowly drove off, keeping my ear close to the open window as long as I was able to hear the angry voices shouting back and forth. Wow, I thought. All that over issues that elementary kids learn to deal with: line-budging and sharing. Some people should learn how to grow up. Other should learn to let some things slide once in awhile.



photo by: Curtis Prevo



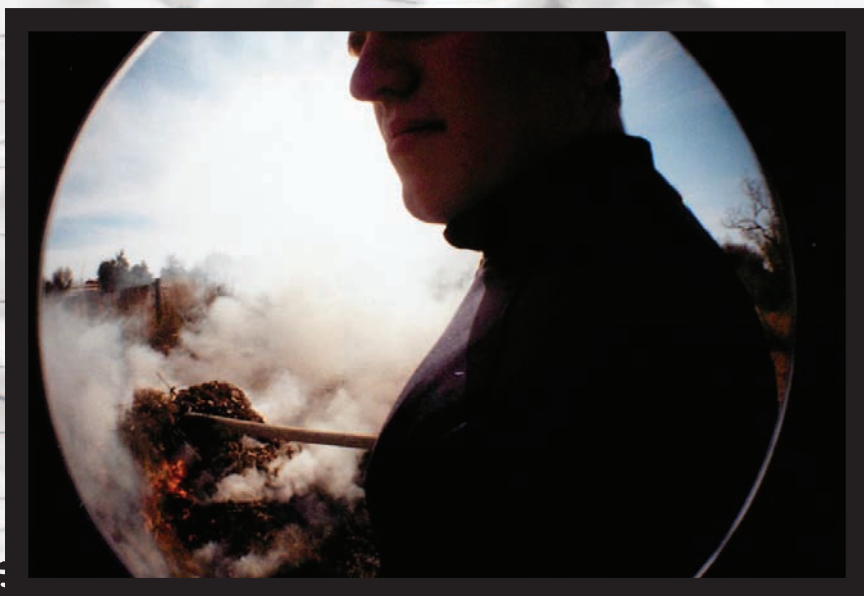


photo by: Robby Van Arsdale



photo by: Christy Kurtz





# More Winter

by: Alison Quiring

Exactly two minutes before his alarm went off, he sat straight up in bed and turned to look at his calendar. "Yep," he murmured sleepily, "it really is Groundhog Day. Guess my dreams were telling the truth." He stretched and yawned then stuck his toes out from under the quilt. He leapt from the warm bed, grabbing his housecoat from the hook as he danced on tiptoes into the kitchen. "Why they do this to me year after year after year is beyond me," he grumbled to himself, holding the hot water heater under the faucet. He plugged in the heater, fumbled through the cupboard for a mug, and tossed in the contents of a hot chocolate packet. He turned on his laptop, which was still sitting in the middle of the kitchen table where he'd placed it last night after playing a game or two of solitaire, and navigated to his favourite news site. "Hmmm, looks like the crowds are already gathering," he said. Then the hot water heater whistled and he ran to pour the piping hot water into his mug.

He sipped the hot chocolate while browsing some more news stories. Then a instant message box popped up on his desktop. WHAT'D YA THINK? SIX MORE WEEKS OF WINTER THIS TIME? He grinned an evil grin, finished his drink in one long swig, and typed back. A new message popped up from another of his cohorts. Soon the chats were all linked and messages flew back and forth. Finally, he ended the conversation. WELL GANG, LET'S GET ON TO BUSINESS. He signed off the instant messenger, checked the news site once more, and closed the lid of his computer. Leaving the dirty mug in the sink, he went to the bathroom to groom. Once his teeth were brushed, his ears cleaned, and his fur combed and looking presentable, he walked back into the kitchen and looked at the microwave clock. 7:56. It was early. Earlier than he ever got up. But this was a once-a-year event, and he couldn't be late. There would be no fun in that. He washed his mug as he waited a few more minutes. 7:59. It was time. Then he opened his front door and sauntered up the tunnel.

Just out of sight of the crowds he leaned nonchalantly against a pre-cleaned place on the wall (Didn't want to get his fur dirty just before appearing), and sucked on the mint he'd popped in his mouth just before leaving the house. He would let them wait until it was almost 8:01. Let the suspense build a little. Finally he knew it was time. He smoothed the fur on his belly into place with one final pat, gave a quick, energizing shake, and dashed up the last bit of tunnel. He poked his nose, then his head, out of his hole, quickly assessing the crowd gathered behind a protecting fence. (Who does it really protect? he always wondered. Them or me?)

At the sight of his silky head, they burst into cheers and applause. Ahhh, just the same as every year, he thought. After the moment of surprise was over, he vaulted from the tunnel, and scrambled out of the darkness cast by the

overhanging tree branches. Yes, it was sunny; this was perfect. He shuffled into the bright morning sunlight. Stop. Look confused, or maybe almost curious. Watch the ground and amble forward a step or two. Jump back, just the tiniest amount. Stare at the shadow of yourself. Look horrified. Edge backwards. Slowly, slowly. OK. NOW! Turn straight around and run FAST, back to the hole. Dive into the tunnel and disappear.

Out of breath (and thinking, not for the first time, I really should get up every so often and work out a bit), he ran down the tunnel and gasped to a stop just around the corner, out of sight of the crowds of people. Yes! He had done it! It had been more than perfect. He had seen their expressions. They were hoping for a good sign, but he'd pulled that hope away. Six more weeks of winter for those humans to contend with. Six more weeks for all the humans; the other ground-hogs had done the same thing. He didn't care one bit. He'd be curled up fast asleep and dreaming in his cozy underground bed.



photo by: Christy Kurtz





photo by: Kristin Thomas





# OCD?

by: Alison Quiring

Kaitlyn held her towel up with one hand and jerked open her closet door with the other. She didn't even have to look as she grabbed a shirt off its hanger. Today was Wednesday and that meant she would wear a solid-colored shirt. Her closet was impeccably organized into sections. All her dress clothes were hung on the very left hand side of the closet. Then came a section for each day of the week. Monday's shirts were striped, Tuesday's were plaid or checkered, Wednesday's were solid colors and Thursday's were polka dotted. Friday's section held all Kaitlyn's patterned shirts that didn't fit into one of the other categories. After the Friday section hung all her other shirts, the old, stained, and baggy ones that she wore on the weekends.

Kaitlyn's closet had been organized this way ever since the week before she started kindergarten. Before that she had been content to let her mother organize her clothing and pick out what she would wear each day. But that week, just before beginning school for the first time, a snow plow driver had unknowingly sideswiped her mother's car as she drove down their street on her way to work. She died instantly and Kaitlyn's world changed just as fast.

Her father, deep in his own grief, had left choosing clothing up to Kaitlyn and she took charge of her own life for the first time ever. That Monday just hours after being told the news, she stood in front of her closet, still in her pajamas, and looked up at the clothes haphazardly tossed onto hangers and shelves by her hurried mother late the evening before. As Kaitlyn gazed into the unorganized mess, something deep within her shattered. She had to do something. Needed something to occupy her so she wouldn't give in to the confusion and chaos swirling through her body. So she became a whirlwind, yanking shirts from hangers, pulling pants off shelves, tossing shoes out of her way. When the closet was empty she moved on to the dresser, tugging the heavy drawers from their mounts and dumping socks, underwear, belts, hats, mitts onto the growing pile of clothes in the middle of her bedroom floor. Every shred of clothing ended up in the pile and then, with a sniff to keep the tears away, she grabbed her swimsuit from the top of the heap and started to reorganize her clothes, first the dresser, than the closet.

Kaitlyn had kept her clothes organized exactly the same as how she put them away that afternoon twelve years earlier. She had even added more structure to her clothing-management plan as she grew older. Each night, she would put the shirt she had worn in the back of that day's section. She only wore that particular shirt the next time it got to the front of the section. Kaitlyn loved her method of organization. She was tied to it. Couldn't function if someone else came into her room and messed up her clothes-order. She had gone into a fit of rage when her

younger sister tried to borrow a T-shirt a few years earlier. Amanda had learned her lessons and had never tried that again.

Now, as she reached for the sky-blue shirt in the front of her Wednesday-pattern section, she smiled. Everything was as it should be. Her closet was in order, so her life was too. Never mind that Gypsy was yapping his head off and scratching at the front door to go out. Never mind that in the kitchen right down the hallway her thirteen-year-old sister was whining to her father about needing more allowance. Never mind that one of the twins was screaming that he hated Shredded Wheat and the other one was singing "This is the Song that Never Ends" at the top of his voice while banging his spoon on the table. Never mind that her step-mother's high heels were, at this very moment, clacking down the hardwood stairs to tell them both to hush up and eat before their carpool ride arrived to cart them off to R.O. Harvey Elementary. Kaitlyn blocked out all those sounds as she pulled the solid-colored shirt from the hanger, slipped it over her head, and got ready for another organized day of school.



photo by: Christy Kurtz



# Voice Competition

by: Alison Quiring

She grabbed the mike from the volunteer's wrinkled hand and marched up the seven steps to the platform. She strode to the middle of the stage, turned to face the audience, and positioned herself at the very edge of the stage. The child stood so near the edge that the tips of her black patten dress shoes hung over into space. With a movement surprisingly fast for one so small she shifted the mike into one hand and smoothed the front of her bluebell-sprinkled dress with the other. Then she held the mike in both hands again and lifted it to her mouth. She flashed a huge grin past the judge into the silent audience and then closed her dancing green eyes, let out a small barely audible breath, and sang.

The judge, who had given the four-year-old an encouraging smile just seconds before, dropped the red pen she was holding. It clattered against the oak table but the child didn't open her eyes, break her rhythm, or lose her concentration. Her clear sweet voice echoed through the auditorium and the audience sat enraptured. She stood perfectly still on the edge of the stage, moving only her head as she sang. Brown ringlet-curls framed the small tanned face and swayed with the movements of her head. The notes floated up into the rafters as the minute singer ended her song.

For one second after the last sound faded the child kept her eyes closed, standing as still as a miniature mannequin in a store window. Then her eyes popped open and she raised the mike back to her lips. "I have to go to the bathroom," she announced emphatically. The crowd, judge included, burst into a swell of laughter and the girl returned a soft giggle, the only shyness she had shown since her name had been called. She rocked back and forth on her shoes until the volunteer walked across the stage to grab her hand and lead her to a back stage bathroom. The judge picked her red pen up from the floor where she'd dropped it and began to write on the blank form sitting on the desk in front of her.



photo by: Ashley Dunbar





# Gethsemane

by: Ashley Dunbar

He fell prostrate onto the earth, digging his nails into the soil. Sweat beaded and rolled down his face as if he were bleeding. The night was humid, fog seeping into every crack of the garden and clinging onto his dark brown hair. He clutched deeper into the dirt, feeling the pressure of it beneath his nails, and placed his wet cheek onto the cool, damp grass. He cried horribly, his insides shaking, and his shoulders weighed down as if the world sat upon them. It took every ounce of strength he had to look up toward the night sky, full of bright stars. The world seemed to move onward, not caring about the struggles he was facing at the moment. He looked back toward the entrance of the garden where his friends were waiting. They should have been helping him, but he knew they were sleeping. It had been a rough few days. They were tired. He crawled pathetically over to a tree, his hands shaking weakly as his fingers wrapped around the gnarled, rough roots. He wept even harder. If anything could be done to lift the burden he was carrying, he wished with every bit of his existence that it would be done. It needed to be effective immediately.

He managed to pull himself to his feet, but he still staggered, clutching desperately to the tree's trunk. With weary, weighed steps, he walked himself to where his friends were sitting. They were sleeping deeply; heads slumped into their chests without a care. He took in their appearance, wiping off the sweat from his face and stifling back hot tears. He whispered slightly for them to wake, reached over with careful movements to touch them lightly on the shoulders. They stirred, almost surprised at how much older he looked from the last time they had seen him. It had only been moments . . . his eyes were full of emotion, too much emotion, and his arms hung limply at his sides. His clothes were sopping with sweat. His hair was matted and dirty. He looked awful. When he spoke to them, they could barely hear him above the insects.

"Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" Their eyes fell to the ground. They tried to wipe away the fatigue. He looked at them desperately, as if trying to justify his life and everything he had done up to that point. Finally, he sighed and looked at them again. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

A second time, he disappeared into the fog. He could feel his friends fading fast. They would be asleep again within minutes. He fell heavily onto his knees, hands outstretched, his face turned toward the sky. He began crying again, the tears leaving stains on his cheeks.

"My Father," he called out hopelessly. "If you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

His body began turning against him. His stomach twisted and he felt himself

retching, but nothing happened. There was nothing inside to bring up. The ground smelled fresh, clinging to his beard. It seemed this was the deepest despair he had yet experienced. His heart throbbed and he felt as if his body might collapse in on itself, as he lay crumpled on the ground. As everything began to fade, a calming sensation came over him, brushing his cheeks and bringing his face upward. He rested there, as if in an embrace, for a few moments. His energy seemed to return slightly. He pushed himself to his feet once again, heading back to where his friends sat sleeping. He cleared his throat and they quickly awoke, keeping their eyes from his. The depth and intensity of them were too hard to meet.

"Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

The clanging of metal and thudding of footsteps could be heard, the rumbling felt through the dense ground. The smoke from their torches burned in the back of his throat and he felt his insides begin to shake with anxiousness. His friends jumped hastily to their feet, realizing their time with him would be over sooner than they had wanted. They saw one of their own leading the group of soldiers, walking forward to him and kissing his cheek delicately. His eyes were dead as they met the betrayed. Those deep, intense eyes were now soft and longing, most definitely loving. They were endless, searching. The man who had kissed him couldn't bear them either.

As the guards walked forward with the chains, Jesus held his hands out with a crestfallen surrender. He looked like a vagabond standing there, metal cutting into the flesh of his wrists. It seemed, when his eyes met mine, the betrayer, as if his thoughts were saying just to be with you, I'm giving everything. There's no price I am not paying. I'm giving my life away. Just to be with you.



photo by: Curtis Prevo



# Questions

by: Olivia Nieb

Third Place

How wet should dirt be before it's called mud?  
How big's a smidgen? Do angels have blood?  
What if a deaf person had allergies?  
Would they be signing with each cough or sneeze?  
Arrows on exit signs-what are they for?  
Who wouldn't know to go THROUGH the closed door?  
When is a small river just a big stream?  
Do we see color in every dream?  
Should more than one platapus be "platapi?"  
Who was the genius to first wear a tie?  
Why do we slap people's hands when we're glad?  
What makes our eyes water when we are sad?  
Who really knows how Abed-Nego died?  
Could we invent a new word if we tried?  
How can we know if a dog's color-blind?  
Why are these questions pervading my mind?

Strikingly Verdant

Third Place

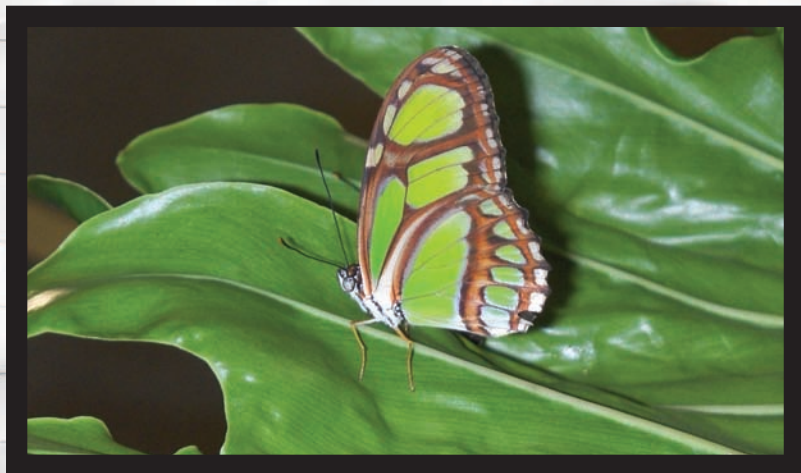


photo by: Christen Cool

# Haven Interrupted

by: M. M. Elmendorf

They were sitting at the table across from me in the back-alley café I sometimes went to on bad nights. (Of course what warranted a bad night was never consistent for me. Sometimes it was obviously not my fault and other times, well let's just say other times I turned off my internal dialogue and remained purposefully ignorant.) In reference to the café, there was nothing about the outside that could be considered appealing, so the presence of "outsiders" was somewhat jarring. With its cock-eyed sign that never lit up correctly and its graffiti-riddled front the café looked like the sort of place that allowed cockroach's free range—I had, in fact, seen one or two, or perhaps the same one twice.

The inside was not much better; if anything it was worse. A perpetual haze hung low in the room—it wouldn't be surprising if it was leftover fumes from cigarettes smoked over a decade ago. The tile floor looked like it had seen better days—but I often wondered if there ever had been—and the dated wallpaper was peeling. There was only one room. One large room; it was cluttered with mismatched furniture, all pot-marked from the wear and tear of hard, café life.

Despite all this, this place was my haven. No one knew about it; at least, no one who meant anything to me. When I stepped through those doors I stepped into an asylum for others like myself. The waitress knew my face but not my name and never made an attempt to learn it. I liked it that way. The regulars recognized me but never acknowledged me, nor I them, and we liked it that way. This was the sort of place one went to forget and to be forgotten, just like the café we sat in. Time stood still in this woe-begotten corner of the world, and whether that was good or bad depended on the person.

So with this in mind it can be understood why the appearance of the nicely dressed couple across from me would be so surprising. How they ended up here was a mystery, and I believe that is what prompted me to sit so close to them, and so far away from my usual haunt in the far corner. They were quiet when I first sat down with my mug and paper. (They seemed to be just as enthusiastic about apathy as the rest of us regulars.) I pulled out my pen, just in case, but settled over my paper, all the while keeping my senses attuned to them.

"that doesn't mean it's true." The man broke the silence.

The woman stared down at her cup as she anxiously stirred her drink, "But what if he's right? What then?"

"Then we'll just have to face that wall when we come to it." The man glanced up and I quickly focused on my paper. "There is no use in fretting over something we can't control."

"That's easy for you to say. You aren't the one who's—" his hand reaching across





the table and grabbing hers' silenced her.

"Don't even mention it." His face drew into a severe frown. "We aren't going to talk about it."

"Why?" she pleaded. "Why can't we talk about? Just because we aren't talking about it doesn't mean it isn't there. Sooner or later we're going to wake up and find truth slapping us in the face."

"Slapping? Really?" He drew back. "That's beside the point. We don't need to focus on something we can't change." I watched as he crossed his arms over his chest and I could almost see his mind closing against anything further she might say. "In any case we don't need to waste our gray matter on something that isn't a sure thing."

Though dismissed she countered, "Denial, you're suggesting purposeful denial. That's real mature."

"Just because I'm advising we not name the elephant in the room doesn't mean I'm promoting denial. There is a difference." He sounded patronizing but from the look on her face she appeared accustomed to it, though not exactly happy with it.

"I see no difference."

"That's because you refuse to keep an open mind." A condescending smirk played at his lips.

"So because I'm the one who's—"

"Don't." His voice rose slightly and she blushed, quickly glancing around before turning a frustrated gaze on him.

"Why can't I, we, face the truth?"

"Because we don't know for sure that it is the truth."

She went back to stirring her already over-stirred drink, "Oh we know. If anyone isn't keeping an open mind right now it's you."

"Listen to me. We can't take one man's opinion as fact. That would be ridiculous."

"Unless that man is you is that it?" She looked away from her drink and I quickly refocused on my paper when her gaze traveled towards me. "You are the alpha and omega; you know all."

If humans could growl he most certainly would have from the look he gave her then. "I never said that."

"You may not have but you certainly treat me that way."

He scoffed, "And you think you're unblemished? You think you aren't partly to blame for my actions?"

She winced, as did I, at his tone. There was a dark history hovering over their

table. I could see it festering in the background of their relationship. It reminded me of the portraits of the Black Death that I'd once seen in Switzerland. In the different portraits a skeleton always stood in the corner, his arms outstretched towards his prey. Sometimes the skeleton was more prominent, once or twice even embracing his victim, but always, the skeleton hovered nearby, waiting and watching. I wondered just what their Black Death was and who the victim had been. (Or perhaps they were both equally victimized.) Either way, a skeleton hovered in their corner.

"I don't understand." Her voice suddenly wavered and I watched as her shoulders lost their strength. "How did this happen to us?"

He looked away and played ignorant as well as deaf.

"How did we end up like this?" her voice was soft now, like that of a child. "We were so happy."

He was silent and after a moment she fell silent too. They refused to look at one another. Though they sat at the same table I saw a canyon between them. I did not foresee any bridges being made for this sort of canyon. It was the self-made kind. They didn't bother finishing their drinks. He paid and got up, leaving her to put on her coat and follow at her own pace. He walked out the door and lit a cigarette, waiting on the corner for her to join him, or not.

I watched as she took a deep breath and slowly let it out. As she stood her gaze caught mine and I found myself unable to look away. Desperation, that is what I saw in her eyes, desperation and loss. I didn't know what to do, how to break the stare. I was so used to never making eye contact in this place that now that I had I felt I'd crossed some line that I could never go back to. No longer would this place be my refuge. I'd made contact with someone else. I could no longer forget and be forgotten. I was human again, not just a lump of apathetic flesh taking up space in a dusty corner.

She gave me a wobbly half smile and I found myself nodding to her in return. What did that nod mean? Was I acknowledging the fact that I'd heard the conversation or was I letting her know I empathized with her pain? What did nods mean anyway? No matter though. She was soon gone and I was left in a very unsettled state. The once comforting haze embracing me now felt suffocating. I squirmed in my chair. The once sheltered feel was now alienating and I felt almost frantic for human contact. I finished my drink and gathered my things. Before I left I made eye contact with the waitress. She seemed just as startled by my actions as I was. Perhaps I was getting into a habit now. I gave her a nod then left. I'd never come here again. This place was now, officially, a part of my past.

As I made my way down the street I came across the same couple standing at the taxi stand. Again, though they stood side-by-side, I saw a noticeable distance between them. Both their faces were drawn in similar expressions of anger and dejection. I ducked my head and hurried on. I reflected back on their exchange and I shuddered for them. I don't think they would ever continue the conversation.



How could they when there was no answer to her question—at least no answer that would satisfy them both. In truth, I wonder, whose fault is it when happiness is lost within a relationship? Is it the one who gives up or the one who tries too hard?

I continued down the street and suddenly shuddered for myself. I saw the potential for myself in them and that was frightening. Could I someday in the future have a conversation similar to that? Would I too ask, “how did this happen to us? We were so happy once.” Sometimes we don’t see the truth about our own futures until we see the horrible present of others. With this revelation in mind, I went home. And stayed.

## First Place



photo by: Christy Kurtz



photo by: Ashley Dunbar

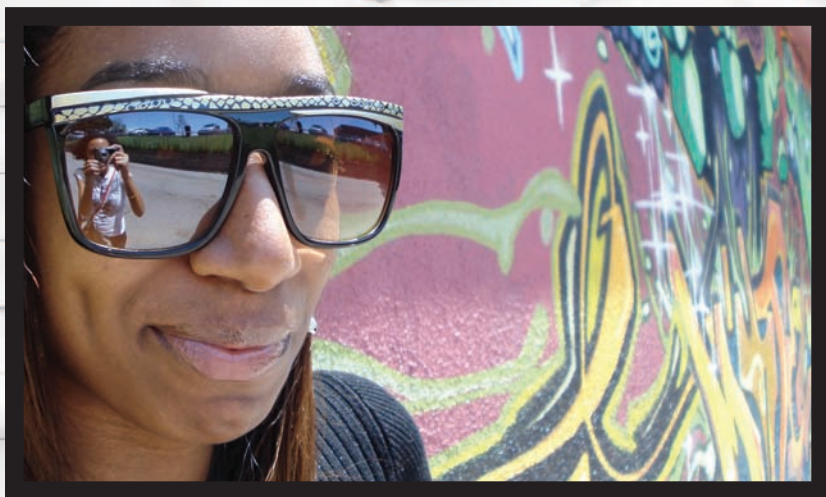


photo by: Aimee Bradshaw





# Just Passing Through

by: Daphne Bastien

I don't know what to make of the current situation. I've woken up to find a man kneeling above me. He is very close to my face. So close I can smell pickles on his breath. He's saying something that I cannot quite understand. He holds up four fingers and then his mouth moves. I assume that must mean he wants me to tell him how many are up. His fingers I mean.

"Four." I hear myself say. "Ouch." There is a throbbing pain in my head and suddenly I can hear again.

"Easy, there." The guy says, "That was a pretty nasty fall."

I attempt to take in my surroundings while he talks. I am on the floor of aisle six of the super market. There are boxes of macaroni and spaghetti all over the place. A pyramid of tuna cans has toppled over and I am sitting in a pool of pickle juice. My jeans are soaked through to my underwear and there are a few people gathering a few feet away from us watching intently.

"I saw you fall from over there." The guy says pointing to the end of the aisle. "I was asking after you to see if you needed help reachin' that box of stuffin'."

The smell of the pickles are making me feel sick and I get the urge to stand up, but I can't because my legs are a bit limp and numb.

"I saw you steppin' into the carriage from where was standin', right, and then I saw the carriage begin to sway back and forth and I knew right then what was comin'. So I came running over to you but it was to late. The carriage slipped out from under you and down you fell onto your back and on your head."

I attempt to stand up. I am on my feet for about a second before I feel my legs go slightly limp again.

"Easy does it. It was a pretty nasty fall." The guy says to me.

"I think I'll be okay." I say to him. I feel embarrassed and uneasy as I notice even more eyes on me now. My bottom is still soaked in pickle juice and I'm in the arms of a stranger. "Thank you for your help, sir."

"My names Jenson, by the way. Jenson Weever." He says to me as if it makes much of a difference. I feel so foolish. I think he notices my discomfort because he says, "At least now we're not complete strangers. Here take my Jacket."

Without my permission he removes his jacket and wraps it around my waste.

"Excuse me. Pardon me. Make way please. Pardon me ma'am. Excuse me sir. Ms.? Are you alright?"

The Manger's come out now, which has got to be the icing on the cake.

"Here, take this ice pack for your head." He says handing the ice pack to me.

"Thank you, but really I feel okay. I just have to get my bearings straight."

I take a minute to look this guy up and down. He's kind of old. He's sizing me up while I stand there awkwardly with the ice pack on my head.

"Do you remember what happened?" he asks me.

"Ask him. Apparently he saw everything." I say nonchalantly.

Jenson proceeds to tell the manager why I was passed out on the grocery floor for all of 15 seconds. As they discuss and evaluate my situation I see that the wrinkles sort of dance on Jenson's face. They are not the same wrinkles that you'd see on an older person because Jenson looks about thirty. They are like waves on his face that enhance his emotion as he retells the story.

"Thank you for the ice pack. I really think I should clean this up. I'm real sorry, you know." I say jerkily as I begin to pick up bits of shattered pickle jars of the tile floor.

"Nonsense." The manager says to me. "I'll have one of my boys clean this up."

"Oh." I say feeling even worse about leaving a mess for some poor kid to pick up because of my stupid mistake. "Well, I'm really okay. I think I'm going to leave." I say half to the manager and half to Jenson. I begin walking away.

"I'm just gonna make sure she gets out okay." I hear Jenson say from behind.

I hear footsteps jog up behind me. I walk through the sliding doors that fling themselves open at my command.

"You should really get that head checked out." He says to my back because I'm walking almost too briskly for him to keep up.

Nope just kidding. He catches up to me and grabs me by my shoulder gently but firmly enough to get my attention.

"Hey. Did you hear me? You need to get that head checked out."

Finally I reach my car and I begin to look for my keys.

"Like I said before I'm fine. It was a little spill."

Bingo. Door is unlocked and I hop into my jeep.

"Look I don't think you should drive. No matter how fine you say you are you still just fell on that head o' yours."

"It's no big deal really" I say starting the ignition.

"No, I'm-

I can tell he's thinking fast. Really trying hard to find a way to keep me there. I'm sure lying in front of my tires crossed his mind but I can tell he was smarter than that seeing as I clearly would have run over his body.

"You can't-



As I looked over my shoulder to see if I could back out of my parking space the lightbulb went off in his head and in a second he was opening my passenger door and hopping in the seat.

"Excuse me. What are you doing?" I said with dismay. "You are a stranger. Please get out of my car."

"I can't. I won't." He said strapping himself in with the seat belt. "It's not safe for you to be drivin' alone. Besides I told you my name was Jenson. So we're not strangers after all."

I give him a look before saying, "So what are you planning on doing? You gonna come home with me? I'm not taking you to my house! I barely even know you."

"Then don't take me to your house. Take me...take me uh...take me to a diner." He said in all seriousness.

"Excuse me?"

"Yeah, take me to a diner. No better still, I'll take you to a diner." He said unbuckling his seat belt. "Here move." He said unfastening my belt and shoving me to the passenger side.

"Hey, this is my car! You are...what are you doing? This is a violation of some sort. I know it. If I could just think properly." I said pinching my nose.

He looked at me with very sincere eyes and said "Don't worry, you're in good hands." And proceeded to pull out of the parking space. "Besides a little coffee will do that bruiser some good."

I knew I was okay.

I knew I was okay for a couple of reasons. One was because I was in the middle of saint city, Motley to be more precise. Everyone had a pleasant disposition all of the time and the only crime that was ever committed was having not tried Mrs. Randal's famous oatmeal chocolate chip cookies.

We drove for a little while before we pulled into Dana's Diner. We hadn't talked for the ride up to the diner but it wasn't awkward. It was just a peaceful silence.

Jenson jumped out of the jeep and ran around to my side to open the door for me. To bad I was already half way out the door.

"I've got it." I said.

When inside the waitress showed us to a booth for the two of us and handed us menus. I couldn't help but notice how the corners curled in on my menu and Jenson's had obviously suffered from water damage and clearly no one had cared to replace it.

"Can I get you any drinks to start you off?" The waitress asked.

"Just a coffee please." Jenson said.



"No problem." The waitress said.

We sat in the booth for a few moments silently.

"So you never told me your name." Jenson said.

I looked at him plainly. There was a reason I didn't want to tell my name. It's cause I didn't want him to know it!

I sighed, "Monica."

"That's a pretty name," he said. "I've never seen you 'round these parts before. You just move here or somethin'?"

Pause.

"No." I say fiddling with the salt shaker.

I sigh again.

"I'm here visiting with my mother. She's not doing to well and I came down to Motley to spend a few days with her while she gets better."

"Oh well where did you come from?"

The waitress is back with my coffee. She pours me a serving into a plain white mug. I catch her name off of her nametag before she walks away.

"Can I have some half and half, please, Toni?" I ask politely.

"Shore." She says.

"I came from upstate New York." I say while adding a packet or two of equal into my coffee and stir.

"Oh. So you're a big New Yorker are you?" he teased

"Upstate New York." I shoot back playfully.

"It's still New York." He says.

"Yur half and half ma'am." Toni our waitress says as she places four mini cartons of half and half on our table. "Can I get you anything else?"

I look at Jenson to see if he'll order anything. He doesn't.


"Nope. We're all set, thanks." He smiles as our waitress leaves. "And what do you do up in upstate New York? If you don't mind telling me o' course."

I pour in all four half and half packets and another equal for effect. "Nothing much. I live in a house that's up in the sticks..." I trail off.

My coffee is a carmel brown. Perfect. I take a big gulp of it. It burns my throat. My eyes water a little so I look out the window so Jenson doesn't notice me wince in pain. The coffee is crappy. Not complete crap but definitely not as great as my double shot espresso at the local Malted Moo by my house up in the sticks.

I think he can tell I'm not going to open up completely. So he starts to tell me a little about himself. He talks about how he's lived in Motley for many years and





how he just needs a break from the place. He tells me about how he wants to sell his, pardon his French, piece of crud farm and use the money to see more of the U.S. He talks so saintly as if talking about these things with me is going to make them happen for real. He is optimistic and his eyes grow brighter as he tells me about how he wants to go to the Grand Canyon and Nevada not for the slots and Yosemite and even Niagara.

I gulp up the rest of my coffee and instantly feel rejuvenated. I feel a little sorry now that I've let him reveal himself to me and I've told him virtually nothing about myself. So I decided to spill the beans about me.

"My name is Monica Rubenstien." I said looking down at my empty mug. Then I looked at Jenson.

"As in the Rubenstein's that made this town what it is? The doorbell Rubenstien's?" he asked with enthusiasm. "Your father was Rodey Rubenstien?"

"Mmhmm." I said flatly. "He was the one that started it all."

"Rodey Rubenstein invented the doorbell!" Jenson said with disbelief of the fact that he was talking to the daughter of the man that invented the doorbell and put Motley on the map.

"Well, like I said, I live in upstate New York. I work part time as a nurse at the nursing home and part time at the library shelving books. I moved there last winter with my husband Steve. We've been happily married for two years and we have three dogs. Mipsy, Molly, and Mutt and a cat named Birdie. Steve is a architect and designs fancy houses for customers that want to move somewhere secluded."

I noticed something change in Jenson's eyes. Something deflated in him.

"I was Rubenstein and now I'm Singer. Monica Steven Singer." I felt uncomfortable for telling Jenson about my life for some reason. Maybe it was because in my book he was still a stranger even though I'd been sitting with him in the diner for almost 30 minutes.

I wipped \$4 out of my pocket to pay for the coffee and set it on the table.

"Don't worry I got it." Jenson said pushing my money aside and putting a \$5 dollar bill on the table.

Yup. Something had definitely shifted in him.

I grabbed my \$4 and put them back into my back pocket.

"I think it'd be best if we head back to the grocery store. You know, where my car is." He said soberly as he got up from the table.

"Alright." I said following after him.

The ride back to the grocery store was quiet and not in a good way. He didn't talk to me whatsoever. He barely looked at me.

When we reached the Grocery store parking lot he pulled into a space right beside his car. His car was a jeep actually. Just like mine only a little older and his

green paint was chipping a little on the rear bumper. When he turned the car off he didn't get out. He didn't move he just sat there with his hands on the steering wheel.

After about three minutes I couldn't take the silence anymore. "Jenson are you alright? I asked softly.

He sat still for another second or two before he turned and looked me straight in the eyes. And for the first time I noticed helplessness and hurt. In that moment we connected. Soul to soul. He leaned in slowly. Slow enough for me to know what was going to happen next. I willed myself to turn and look away or say something but I didn't. Instead I sat still bracing myself for the inevitable. He put his hand under my chin and then it happened. He kissed me. Square on the mouth. He laid a gentle kiss on my lips. I can't say that sparks flew, but after he got out of my car and into his own and even as I watched him drive away in my rearview mirror I knew that a piece of him would always remain, lingering on my lips.

A few moments later I realized that his jacket was still wrapped around my waist and that he'd have to come back for it.



photo by: Ashley Dunbar





# Lamentations of a Twelve-Year-Old Boy

## First Place

by: **Andrew Garcilazo**

It was all my fault. We had been bored, oppressively bored, so a group of us had decided to go out and swim in the creek. It was only a mile or two from town, off the main road a bit, and we were excited because it was finally summertime. That meant heat and humidity.

Birds chirped and insects buzzed in the heavy midday sun. Butterflies fluttered amongst us as we strolled through field and forest, on our way to the riverbank. Life was good, and we were happy. It was a beautiful scene—too beautiful. I should have known something was going to go wrong.

If only I had had a crystal ball, I could have turned around and taken the others with me. We could have gone hiking, or biking, or anything else.

“Come on guys,” I had begged them. They had been smart. They didn’t want to go. They had sensed it.

“Please?” I had said, running my hand through my hair, “We can go swim and then head back to Joey’s place and see his new dog.”

They had resisted, but I was just too good. I was the oldest. I was the ringleader. They all looked up to me and it had been my idea. Therefore, it was my fault.

We reached the creek, and I hopped out of my clothes real quick. The others did the same. I rushed forward with excitement and dipped my foot in the glassy water. It was cold, but inviting, very inviting.

I almost jumped in right then. Somehow I saved myself, but I don’t know how, or why. I was a sissy. Maybe that’s why. I was a bully. Maybe that’s why.

“Ooh it’s cold,” Joey said as he too dipped his feet.


“You go first, Joe,” I said.

“No...it was your idea. You go,” said Joey as he stared off into the bubbling water, his eyes sparkling.

“No! You go. I know you want to,” I said cajolingly, “I’ll buy that piece of candy you always wanted, if you go first.”

“You promise?” Joey asked, stripping off his faded jeans. I nodded my head.

“Shake on it then,” he said. And we shook. I had no intention of buying him that candy. He was just a kid, he wasn’t even ten yet, what did he care? I sure didn’t. See—I was a bully. I should have gone in first. I usually did, but not that day. I was dumb. I should have known.



Excuses, excuses.

With a mighty leap Joey broke the picturesque scene before us. The glassy water was shattered into a million pieces. Our lives were shattered into a million pieces. We were just kids.

Joey stayed under the water for a while. After thirty seconds I started to worry. After a minute I knew something was wrong. The others did too but we were too shocked to do anything. What could we do?

“Joey?” a girl called.

“Where’d he go? What’s wrong?” someone said.

“Peter do something!” said another.

So I jumped in.

I dove into the water much the same way Joey had, but nothing happened to me. Why is that? Did God love me more?

I could hardly see a thing in the murky water of the creek. Soft mud caked the streambed. I swam along on top of it. The smooth, glossy sludge ran through my fingers. It was thick and I made no progress.

I came up for air and dove down again. Someone had run for help, I don’t know who. I did all I could. I heaved up to the surface once again, then fought back to the bottom. Still, I couldn’t find him.

When I came up for the last time I was whipped. Adults had arrived. Somebody jumped in and dragged me from the water. I could hardly walk and had inhaled some water.

Ambulances and cops and firefighters—a whole bunch of sirens—came whirring up to the creek. Rescue parties were formed, but they wouldn’t do any good. The creek had been cursed that day.

Joey was never found. I ended up in the hospital. I received three days of treatment for what the doctor’s called mild pulmonary edema. I dreamed a lot in those three days, about Joey and God, and life, but mostly about what my grandfather used to say. It came up all the time.

“Sometimes life is just too good to be true...”


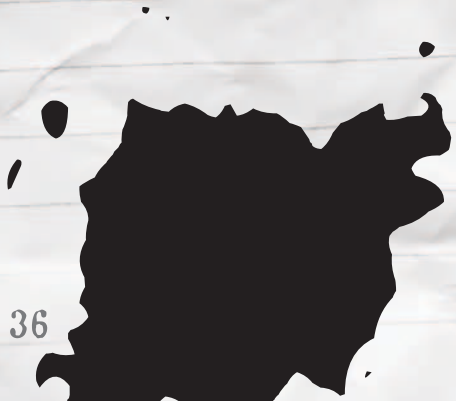






photo by: Aimee Bradshaw

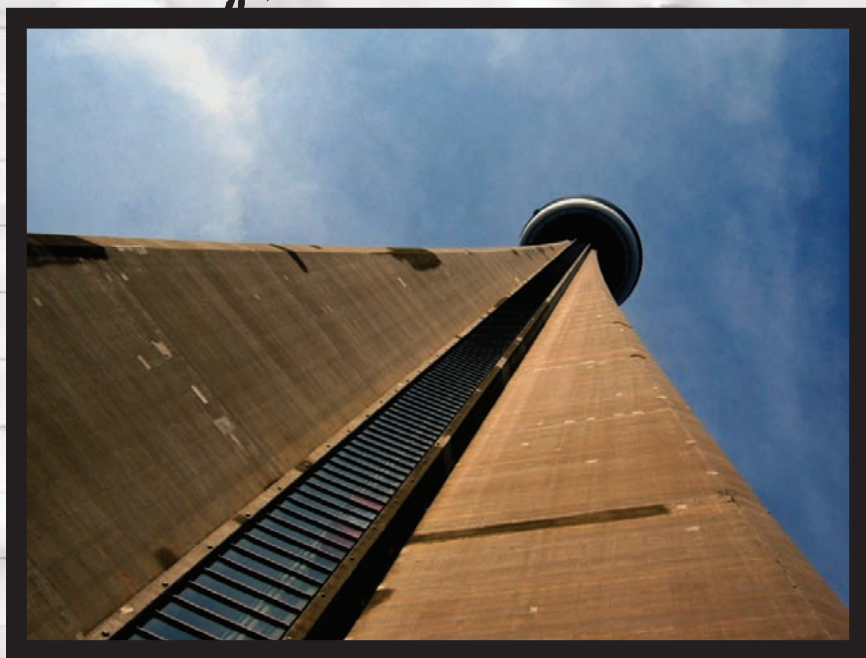


photo by: Aimee Bradshaw

# Sailing

by: Ashley Dunbar

We jumped into the foaming waves, clasp[ing] the ledge of the boat's hull and pulling it toward the pebbles on the shore. The water grabbed at our calves, inching up toward our thighs, but we were faster. I laughed with the sun shining comfortably onto my freckled cheeks and watched as the muscles in your back flexed upon your pulling of the boat. Once we chained it down to the shoreline, we stood, breathing heavily, and staring at the scenery. Clouds, in bright white wisps, painted the rich blue sky. They looked delicate, like strands of hair I could twist between my fingers for hours. You touched my sun-kissed shoulder, bringing my eyes to meet yours.

I reluctantly turned mine up to your deep brown eyes, the color of straight coffee, with the edges of your pupils undetectable. The weather had browned your skin and lightened your hair. The salt from the ocean had taken away the smoothness in your face and hands, but they still felt good against my shoulder. I turned my eyes back toward the boat. White with a red bottom, sails leaning slightly to the left, ropes wound tightly round metal. This is what we had given up a year to do-I would have done it sooner had I known it would mean spending it with you.

## Living Water



photo by: Christen Cool



# Simple

by: Ashley Dunbar

He sits on a couch, the lights off, staring at a blank wall. Outside, the world is rushing around him. It doesn't pause at his convenience. He feels a desire to change, to act, to move. Every second that passes, he tells himself he'll get up and walk out the door and never return to the dark apartment or the mildew-smelling couch. Every second that passes, he stays where he is.

He has a longing to change the situation he's been told he's stuck in. The only problem is he doesn't know how to do it. How do you fix something that you were told cannot be fixed? How do you become something you are not supposed to become? He looks down at his arms, stuck with holes from needles discarded in darkened alleys. This was what he was told he would be. He places his hands on his stubbled face and rubs them over his sunken eyes. How do you change something that isn't supposed to be changed?

The sun sinks below the smallest building. The street lights flicker on. His doorbell rings. He slowly turns his head to the beaten, grey door in the dark at the end of the hallway. He stares. At the second ring, he heaves himself off the worn couch, shuffles down the hallway, unlatches the lock, and swings open the door. It feels lighter than it has lately. There's a stranger waiting on the other side. She's small, shorter than him. She has a bag slung over her shoulder, across her body, and a sweatshirt hanging over it. She smiles slightly. He stares.

Her hand reaches for his, but he doesn't pull it away. It's warm in his. She has an offer. It's unspoken with words, but clearly said by her actions. How do you leave a place you are not supposed to leave?

It's simple. Step over the threshold.



photo by: Ashley Dunbar



photo by: Ashley Dunbar



St. Augustine



photo by: Christen Cool

Second Place

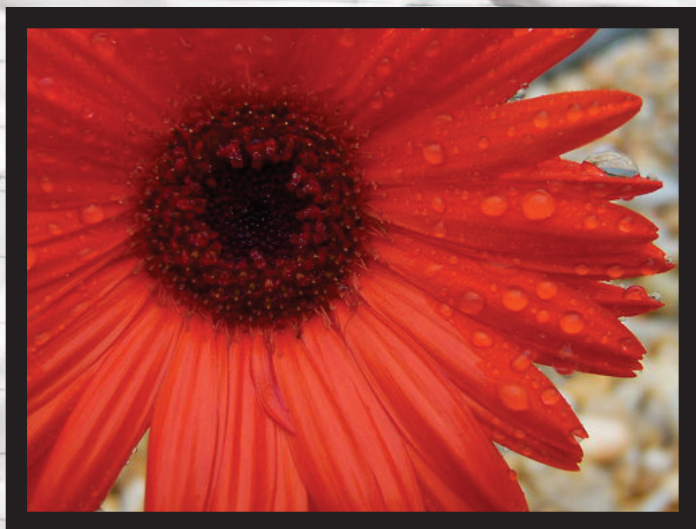


photo by: Ashley Dunbar

# Sparkle

## Third Place

by: Robby Van Arsdale

"Why do people always feel the need to make eyes sparkle in literature?"

Her eyes don't sparkle.

He isn't handsome, and she isn't beautiful.

They date.

Tara isn't someone who you'd look at twice. Rory looks dumpy even when he wears a suit. They have conversations about transmissions and trestles and turnips and the tictoc tictoc tictoc of a grandfather clock. Boring. There's no fire, no passion, no excitement where they're headed. Just a long, slow, winding stair to eternity. Tara looks at Rory with a purely utilitarian eye: a future husband, perhaps. Maybe just a boyfriend. Definitely just a man. Rory doesn't think about Tara after he goes back to his house. Video games? Most definitely. Tara? Boring.

He gets his hair cut. He looks worse.

Tara starts listening to country. Rory hates it, but she doesn't care enough to change. Rory forgets to care.

A year later, on their anniversary, Rory tells her that he's moving to Washington. She stares blankly at him. He starts again. "I'm moving to" She interrupts "I heard you. When do you leave?" Tears? Decidedly not.

Rory breaks up with her over the phone, on the plane to Washington. Like an afterthought - I forgot to break up with you, so here it is - you're free now. Tara stops listening to country.

Tara finds someone new - he winks at her in the movie theater. They talk. People throw popcorn. They run out, he's laughing. Danny is perfect. He's like that guy, in that movie. The one you can never name, but you know it was good. You should watch that movie again. Danny smells like the lemons and laughs loud and hard. He shows up randomly with gifts. He freaks out when she's acting funny. He's sensitive and caring and handsome and loving.

Her eyes don't sparkle.





# The Definition of Love

by: Robby Van Arsdale

The first time they kissed, he wondered if he had finally found love. He wondered if love is fire that burns in the stomach, right between the ribcage and the pelvis, lining your insides with flames. Love: the electric shock from skin contact, from a hand brushing against yours, knees connecting under the table, her stomach when she presses herself close.

If this was love, he was alright. He didn't want anything else – he had found love.

When he asked her to be his wife, he wondered if love had finally revealed itself. He wondered if love is the knowledge that you could spend your life with one person, sharing goals, jokes, fears and longings. Love: knowing you will never leave, that she fills your needs, that you don't want anything, that you're done searching.

If this was love, he was willing to give his life away. As long as he had her with him, he could laugh at the world.


The first time he held their child, he wondered if his eyes were filled with love. He didn't know if it was fair to his wife – he loved this child only because she was the mother. The baby had nothing about it to love. He couldn't love this child, except for his wife's sake. Love: the total abandon of personal precepts in favor of another, purely for their sake, purely because you want everything for them.

If this was love, he could handle it. It wasn't everything he had hoped for, but if it was for her, he could persevere.

When he first left the house and slept at a friend's, he wondered if they needed love. Their daughter was constantly in and out of trouble, and his wife always blamed him. She screamed at him when they went to bed. She seemed like she was angry all the time. When they slept, they faced different directions. Love: the only thing that keeps you from killing someone, the only thing that keeps you from walking out the door, the only thing that forces you to try harder.

If this was love, he didn't know how other men had affairs. He could only deal with loving one woman at a time.

The day their daughter left the house, he wondered if love had been hidden from him. He held out for five minutes, but then broke down crying. She came into the room and found him at his most awkward. He was totally bare, his soul shown to the world, raw with emotion that hadn't let her know he had. He had never known that he loved his daughter until she left to make her own life. Love: the knowledge that you've screwed it all up, that you have no chances left, that you can't go back and change.



If this was love, he didn't want any more.

When she came back from the hospital at the end, he wondered if she knew that he loved her. His memory was filled with all the things he never meant to say, all the things he wished he could undo. But through it all, there was never a moment when he didn't love her. Love: the fear that maybe you'll never have a second chance, that someday they won't be there, that moments don't last forever.

If this was love, he would never have it again.

He rolled over in bed and pulled her close to him. "I love you," he whispered.

"I know." She said, her voice choked with emotion. She had never wanted to know what love was. If this wasn't it - it wasn't worth having.



photo by: Drew Forsey





# The Note

## Second Place

by: Benjamin Charles Chase

Friday:

Strapped for cash and desperate for a book I headed to my local used bookstore in an attempt to find a pocket of knowledge I could identify with. The scene of the crime was McKay's bookstore in Chattanooga, TN. You know you've found the place when you see what appears to be a gathering for a bike rally or a used car convention. Summing the place up in one word is simple: seedy. But they offer good deals and generally as a rule I consider myself a little bit seedy.

I browsed the disorganized shelves in what was turning out to be a dry day. A bookless day. The rule of thumb for dry days is head to the holocaust section. At least I would know what to expect. There they were. All mingled together like a desegregated school bus. Books decreeing the crime of the century, books saying it never happened, ten different prints of Ann Frank's diary and books saying Ann Frank is just as trivial as UFO's and big foot, hard to prove.

I flipped through one holocaust deniers rant filled paperback and decided I would stick to reality instead. The next book I picked up was cleverly titled: "The Lost: A search for six of six million." I skimmed the pages hoping to find the six myself. Instead the pages opened up to a pink notebook paper tucked inside like a bookmark. Someone else's junk I figured. I read the clean handwriting.

Terra Nostra - 436-2830

I enjoyed talking to you when I was at dinner tonight and I wondered if you'd like to go out for lunch or coffee before I go back to school on Thursday afternoon.

Gether phone #

Something about the intimacy of the note made me feel like I wasn't supposed to be reading it. It was for this "Gether" fellow. The space at the bottom reserved for his phone number was blank. I wondered if it had never got to him. Terra Nostra must be lying in wait while this "Gether" is selling his books without leafing through them first. I now had this girl's number through the simple act of being interested in holocaust literature and found myself caught up in something out of my boundaries as a simple passer by.

Saturday:

The pink note lay atop my desk, alone. Coincidentally I was lying atop my bed, alone. The similar conditions of or existence made me feel closer to the note and effectively Terra Nostra. I lay awake and dreamed of who she was. What she like to do on weekends and where she sees herself in five years. The number ran through

my mind 436-2830. It was my number my mark. Like the number tattooed on the Jews talked about in the book I found the note in. I devised a plan for finding Terra Nostra. I would call the number, simple enough.

I would finally find out if she and Gether ever made it out to coffee, if she was happy, and if maybe I could be a friend. The number dialed into my phone and glowing on the screen looked funny. It wasn't the neatly hand written number that was on the pink note. It was now digital and in whatever font Samsung had chosen for my phone. This made me feel detached and feeling like I didn't care anymore. Not for Terra Nostra, not for Gether, and not for myself. All my intentions now seemed empty like the blank space left for Gether's phone number. I put the phone in my pocket and moved on.

Sunday:

The object of my affection is now tucked in an old dusty copy of the bible. A paper of misplaced affection was now pressed against pages of the words of Christ in red. The paperback edition of "The Lost: A search for six of six million" still sits in the dusty bookshelf at McKay's and each passing moment I think I should have left the note tucked inside. Because I to feel lost and wanting to re-title the book "The Lost: A search for seven of six million."



photo by: Kristin Thomas





# Wild

by: Ashley Dunbar

"It's ok to be wild," he says to me, stepping over a long piece of driftwood. He looks out over the grey landscape, coat wrapped tightly around his waist. The waves come in with thunderous anger, spraying up into the foggy air. It's so cold outside.

I try to keep up with him, but my legs aren't as accustomed to the pebbles on these beaches as his legs are. He makes it look so easy. Everything is dreary and I'm not quite sure why we're walking out here in the first place. These aren't usually the kinds of beaches most think about, with tall pines growing almost next to the water. Irritated waves crashing into a sand-less shore with no sun shining, only a joining of sky and water by the never ending colors of grey that paints the horizon. I glance over at him, bundled in his peacoat, dark black against everything colorless. The red scarf tucked into his coat also stands out. Everything about him, really, just stands out.

"Wild in what sense?" I finally manage to say. I wouldn't be surprised if he forgot what he had even said. He looks over at me with a shocked expression. He was thinking the same thing I was, only about me.

"In the sense of being uncivilized to an extent," he answers. He pulls a gloved hand out of his pocket and waves it over the horizon. "Like Washington for example. Right here where we are. Does this look civilized to you? Well, it has to be because we're here, but when we're not, what then? When it's empty, what then? It's ok to not put on airs all the time. It's bad for you. Everyone needs that release, that feeling that you don't have to put up a wall around your personality. Everyone needs to be like this."

Again, he swipes his hand across the air before shoving it deep into his pocket. I remain quiet for a moment. He makes a point. I weave my arm through his and he pulls me tight into him for warmth. I look over at him and smile and he squeezes my arm a little tighter. This must be why he likes this dreary place so much. He can be wild. Here, he can be what he feels he cannot be with anyone else.

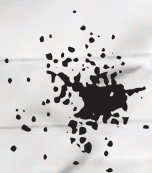




photo by: Kristin Thomas



photo by: Kristin Thomas





# The Gift

by: Mark Barrett, Legacy Editor

Once caught up in cycles of zero-sum apathy,  
I'm prone to give up with amazing alacrity,  
safely sleeping in stasis, this while dreaming of gravity

(searching my roots for some first cause, or longevity),  
only to find what I lack—that being levity—  
is in poetry, the gift to be prized above brevity.



# NOTES:

by: You



# NOTES:

by: You



**The End**



**Designed by:  
Brandon Roberts  
& Suzanne Ocsai**